

10 February 2023

**Customer Feedback Report,
Quarter Two, 2022/23**



Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

**Councillor Susan McDonnell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Digital and
Customer Services**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present an overview of the wide range of information collected from our customers that describe their experiences of using our services.
- 2 The report covers performance in quarter two 2022/23, covering the period July to September 2022.

Executive summary

- 3 Customer feedback such as satisfaction with, and general experiences of, the services and support we provide, is an important aid to improve customer service and align our actions with customer need.
- 4 Performance is reported on an exception basis with key messages under three summary sections of going well, areas which require attention and other areas to note.
- 5 We are continuing to transition into a post-pandemic world, but the impacts of COVID-19 can still be seen in our performance reporting. The last two financial years are not representative for many areas of performance and will be an unfair comparison due to pandemic impacts.
- 6 We have therefore, wherever possible, tried to make the comparison of current performance against pre-pandemic data. Whilst COVID-19 continues to impact on certain performance metrics, there is evidence of some areas returning to pre-pandemic levels.
- 7 However, the biggest challenge for our residents, local businesses and the council currently is the cost-of-living crisis. Inflation is currently

running at 10.1%¹ with the Bank of England expecting it to remain above 10% for a few months before starting to drop². The inflationary increase is largely driven by the rise in the cost of fuel and energy bills, which is being impacted significantly by the war in Ukraine.

- 8 The cost-of-living crisis impacts our contact with our customers in three key ways:
- Demand for financial support and advice services. High inflation is outstripping wage and benefit increases resulting in a fall in income in real terms. This has been further exacerbated by the rising costs of mortgages, energy, and food. This will result in increased demand for services to help support people facing financial hardship or who are in crisis.
 - As we continue to administer support schemes provided through Government funding, customer contact increases as residents make enquiries in relation to their own circumstances. The Government's Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme has resulted in significant increases in customer contact as residents make enquiries and also need support to progress claims (Non Direct Debit payers).
 - As resources are allocated to enable the implementation of additional support schemes, this can have an impact on the performance and delivery of mainstream services which can prompt further contact and potentially complaints.

Recommendation(s)

- 9 That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board notes the overall position and direction of travel in relation to customer feedback, particularly in relation to the continuing impact of COVID-19 and the increased cost of living.

¹ UK Consumer Price Index for 12 months to September 2022

² [Bank of England](#)

Background

- 10 Successful organisations listen and respond to their customers and one way to gain this valuable insight is by gathering and utilising customer feedback. This should then be used to inform learning and continuous improvement across services.

Analysis of Customer Feedback

Going well

- 11 72% of the 421,000 service requests received over the last 12 months were requested via an online form, and 84% of customers who rated the process gave it rating of four or five stars (with five being the highest level of satisfaction). In addition, 82% of the 23,400 customers who responded to our satisfaction survey (automatically e-mailed to the customer when their service request is closed within the CRM) stated they were satisfied with overall service delivery.
- 12 Although service demand has increased and requests have become more complex, both complaints and compliments, as a proportion of demand, have fallen. Fewer complaints are progressing to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Areas which require attention

- 13 During quarter two, we were able to assess 55% of all service requests received against a defined performance standard. The standards set were met in 79% of cases; it is important to note that greater service demand and increased complexity have led to extended service delivery times over the reporting period.
- 14 Dissatisfaction continues to be mainly linked to not keeping customers informed of progress, not explaining our decision making, taking too long to complete tasks, and not resolving the issue long-term.
- 15 An estimated 19% of complaints escalated to independent investigation could have been avoided through either timelier or more comprehensive updates from services, and/or completion of the agreed action in the first instance.

Points to Note

- 16 Contacts are 267,000 higher (+17%) than pre-pandemic, mainly driven by the transfer of telephone lines to our Automated Call Distribution (ACD) system as part of our integrated customer services project. All services

included within the scope of this project are now fully migrated to the ACD.

- 17 Although the telephone remains the most frequently used method for contacting us, digital contact continues to increase and now makes up 22% of all contact. This compares to 15% pre-pandemic.
- 18 Contact through our Customer Access Points (CAPs) has yet to return to pre-pandemic volumes – it is currently around 44%. Although contact has increased since quarter one, this is mainly attributable to queries relating to the Government's Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme (which made up 12% of face-to-face demand during quarter two). The Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme was closed towards the end of the quarter.
- 19 Almost 170,000 households have a do-it-online account (31% higher than pre-pandemic), and just over 71,000 customers (around 30%) receive their council tax bill via email. More than 76,000 residents use the revenues and benefits open portal to view their council tax account.
- 20 We continue to progress our Chatbot project (to reduce avoidable contact and provide digital customer service 24/7 via the council's website) and are investigating additional functionality within the Eckoh³ product – to send customer satisfaction surveys via text message and to incorporate real time information within the system.
- 21 Although, the demand for most services has returned to pre-pandemic volumes, some services continue to receive high levels of contact, most notably across the areas of council tax, waste, registrars, social care direct, children's safeguarding, the integrated transport unit, welfare assistance, and the concessionary bus line.
- 22 Six complaint types collectively make up 40% of all complaints. The most frequent cause for complaint remains missed bins (12% of all complaints) but this equates to only 0.003% of bins scheduled for collection.
- 23 The report in Appendix 2 provides the detailed update on Customer Feedback during quarter two 2022/23 and the actions put into place as a result.

Using feedback to inform learning

- 24 During quarter two, we worked with services to ensure that customer feedback is being used to better understand the experience of accessing council services from the perspective of the customer.

³ Eckoh is the voice recognition system deployed on the main contact centre 03000 number, it prompts the caller to 'describe in a few words' why they are calling. It understands and connects the person to the correct agent or department as well as offering a text message with a link to the appropriate information on the corporate website.

- 25 Initial meetings were held with service managers in Neighbourhoods and Climate Change to consider the data in relation to customer contact and identify key areas of focus. Discussions on the volumes/trends/issues being raised and opportunities for improving the overall experience were progressed.
- 26 As part of this process, opportunities for future co-production with our residents will be explored to ensure that the council is developing services with the customer at the core.

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

Information on financial remedies in relation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is included within the report.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Complaints regarding any equality and diversity aspect are handled in consultation with the Council's Equality Team.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.

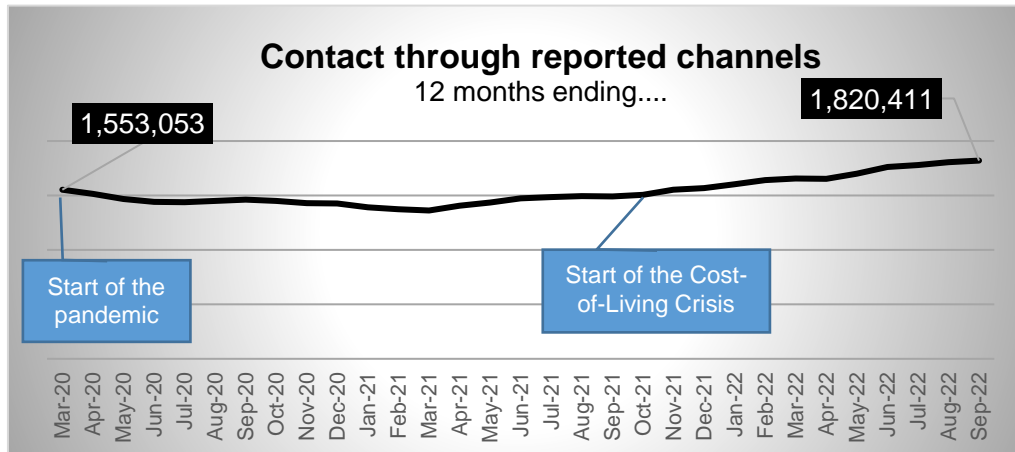


Durham County Council Customer Feedback Report Quarter Two, 2022/23



Contact through our reported channels

- 1 Over the last 12 months we received more than 1.8 million contacts, 267,000 more than the pre-pandemic year⁴. This equates to a 17% increase.



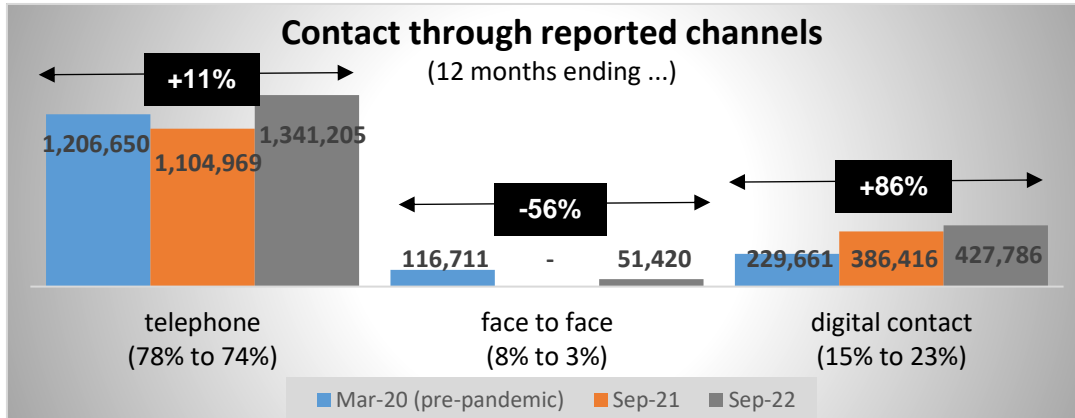
- 2 The main reason for this increase, accounting for around two thirds of the additional calls, is transferring telephone lines to our automated call distribution (ACD) system⁵ as part of our integrated customer services project. 100% of services included within the scope of this project are now fully migrated to the ACD system.
- 3 As we can't migrate past data, transfers create artificial increases in call volumes.
- 4 Transferring the telephone lines of our leisure centres to the ACD system accounts for around 130,000 of the additional calls recorded in the last 12 months (the lines being fully operational in the last 12 months but not in the pre-pandemic year).
- 5 Other lines contributing to the increase but in smaller volumes include County Durham Outreach and Support Team (around 12,000), Special Educational Needs and Disability (around 7,000), bereavement services (around 6,000), school admissions (around 4,000), and welfare rights (around 2,500).
- 6 If we adjust overall call volume by removing those telephone lines for which we do not have a pre-pandemic comparison, then the increase in

⁴ 12 months ending 31 March 2020

⁵ Telephone calls are received either through our Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system, which routes calls to groups of agents based on a first-in-first-answered criteria, or directly to a telephone extension (non-ACD). Only calls received via our ACD system are included in our telephone statistics. When we transfer non-ACD lines into the ACD system, there is no past data. Consequently, it appears that call volume has increased.

overall call volume is around 86,000 (+8%) compared to pre-pandemic volume.

- 7 Three-quarters of contact through our reported channels was via telephone.



- 8 Contact through our Customer Access Points (CAPs) has yet to return to pre-pandemic volumes – it is currently around 44%. However, contact has increased since quarter one, mainly driven by the Government’s Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme which made up 12% of face-to-face demand during quarter two.
- 9 Digital contact is also increasing and now makes up 23% of all contact, compared to 15% pre-pandemic. This increase is driven by more service requests through do-it-online and the increasing popularity of webchat.
- 10 Also, more households have digital accounts and are requesting their council tax bills via email.

Account		Pre-pandemic volume	12 months ending 30 September...		Change since pre-pandemic	
			2021	2022		
Do-it-online (CRM)		129,876	149,117	169,559	+39,683	+31%
Revenues & Benefits	Open Portal	33,876	37,756	76,127	+42,251	+125%
	Council tax e-bills	36,193	32,666	68,630	+32,437	+90%

- 11 Some services are experiencing increased levels of contact compared to the pre-pandemic year. This includes council tax, waste, registrars, social care direct, children’s safeguarding, the integrated transport unit, welfare assistance, and the concessionary bus line.

Comments relating to policies, procedures, decision-making and charges

12 The following table summarises the feedback received over the 12 months ending 30 September 2022.

43 objections to our decisions (+16)	Mostly related to operational decisions, e.g., road closures, operating hours, planning decisions, waste collection.
67 dissatisfied with fees and charges (+47)	Almost half related to leisure centres (13) or replacement bins (17). Remaining feedback was across a wide variety of service areas in smaller numbers.
61 comments about policies / procedures (-107)	Three quarters related to waste: 33 to refuse and recycling services and 15 to HWRC policies / procedures. The remainder covered a range of other policies and procedures.

Performance Standards

- 13 55% of all CRM service requests received during quarter two can be assessed against a performance standard⁶. Of these, 79% met the performance standard.
- 14 Eleven service areas met the performance standard for at least 80% of requests. This included: request help with your bin (97% within seven days), applications for the care academy (96% within five days), litter reports (86% within 10 days), and street lighting (82% within 10 days).
- 15 However, 15 service areas met the performance standard for less than 50% of requests. This included: rubbish in gardens and yards (46% within 10 days), grass cutting, shrubs and flower beds (44% within 5 days), missed bin collection (41% within 3 days), and road signs (31% within 15 days).
- 16 In relation to the other areas showing performance standards of less than 50%, the service areas are working with our data teams to ensure that the correct processes are being followed and to resolve any glitches following system integration, we are investigating this as a priority.

⁶ Performance standards are not applied if the process is not fully managed within CRM which accounts for 48% of processes. We did not apply performance standards to many of the COVID-related service requests, partly due to the speed of the set-up, but also due to the complexity / unknown elements of request which often resulted in required modifications as the pandemic progressed.

Customer suggestions

- 17 Whilst we receive and review all suggestions, most have been addressed previously and/or considered as part of service development.
- 18 A small sample of customer suggestions received during the latest quarter is attached at Appendix three.

Customer Compliments and Star Rating Feedback

- 19 Although most compliments relate to satisfaction with service provision, we continue to receive praise specific to the actions of our staff.
- 20 There were recurring themes in the feedback received through the star rating system. Respondents rating the service as three star and above tended to have positive feedback in relation to our website (e.g., simple to use, professional, easy to navigate); our processes (ease of completing forms); overall service delivery; and staff.
- 21 Respondents rating the service as one star or two stars tended to have negative feedback in relation to our website (slow, unresponsive, confusing to use, crashes); service delivery (failure to provide); contact channels (difficulties reaching us using telephone); and the time spent on trying to resolve an issue.
- 22 A small sample of the compliments and star rating feedback received during the latest quarter is attached at Appendix four and five.

Customer satisfaction through the CRM⁷

- 23 Overall, 82% of the 23,400 respondents to our satisfaction survey (which is automatically e-mailed to the customer when their service request is closed within the CRM) stated they were satisfied with overall service delivery.
- 24 Service areas attaining an overall satisfaction rating of at least 90% include requests relating to: birth, death and marriage certificates (98%); waste permits (98%); bulky waste collections (96%); assisted collection (96%); joining the garden waste scheme (95%); domestic pest control (95%); and applying for free school travel (94%).

⁷ Customer satisfaction surveys are automatically e-mailed to the customer when their service request is closed within the CRM. The response rate has improved over the last two years and is currently around 5.6% of service requests. As the results are taken from a sample survey, we are carrying out further work to determine if the results are statistically relevant.

- 25 Service areas attaining a satisfaction rating of less than 70% include requests relating to: complaints (47%); draining and flooding (65%); pruning or removing a tree or hedge (65%) and generic enquiries (65%).
- 26 The main driver for these low satisfaction levels is timeliness (both acknowledgement and response).
- 27 The survey also showed that overall:
- 97% felt their request was handled knowledgeably and effectively,
 - 92% found it easy to contact the right service,
 - 87% were satisfied with our handling of the initial contact,
 - 78% were informed of how long it would take to complete the task,
 - 64% were kept informed of progress,
 - 83% were satisfied with the time taken to complete the task,
 - 82% felt they were treated with dignity and respect,
 - 82% were provided with clear information,
 - 82% of respondents who were satisfied with overall service delivery

Customer satisfaction with theatre provision⁸

- 28 Across the three venues of the Gala, Bishop Auckland Town Hall and Empire, respondents rated the following as 'good' or 'very good':

	Overall	Gala	Bishop Auckland	Empire
Ticket booking experience	95%	96%	95%	94%
Staff welcome	95%	95%	98%	96%
Food and drink facilities	70%	65%	82%	78%
Quality of event	97%	97%	95%	96%
Value for money	96%	95%	95%	96%
Whole Experience	97%	97%	98%	95%

- 29 During quarter two, we received 125 suggestions for improvement via our survey. Two thirds of this feedback related to five areas: the temperature within the auditorium (mainly customers finding it too cold); poor toilet facilities; uncomfortable seating particularly limited leg room; long queues

⁸ January to October 2022

at bars during intervals; and sound issues, including issues with the hearing loop at the Gala.

Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)

30 234 requests were received during quarter two, 3% fewer than the same period last year. We responded to 79% of requests within 20 working days, this is below the target (95%).

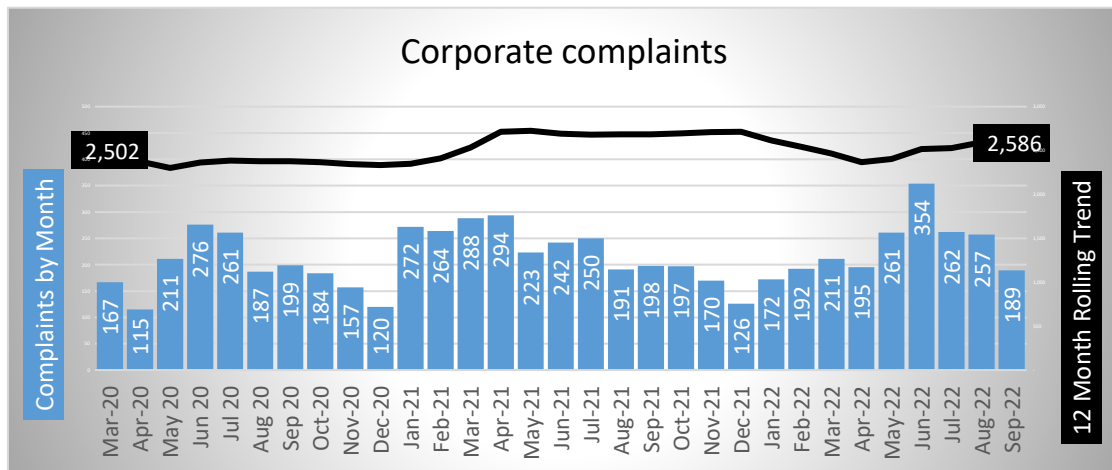
Priority Correspondence

31 The main topics during quarter two were enquiries relating to housing, planning and the £150 council tax energy rebate. We also received enquiries in relation to supporting refugees.

Complaints⁹

Corporate Complaints

32 Corporate complaints have increased slightly compared to pre-pandemic volumes (+3%). However, this needs to be considered within the context that demand across many of our services remains high and is, in many cases, becoming more complex. Of those complaints investigated, 44% were upheld, an improvement on last year when 49% were upheld.



33 Six areas of complaint collectively make up 40% of all complaints.

34 The most frequent cause for complaint continues to be missed bins. However, although missed bins account for 12% of all complaints, this

⁹ statutory complaints that arise from our duties as a local social services authority and corporate complaints that cover all other complaints

equates to only 0.003% of bins scheduled for collection. Around 71% of these complaints were upheld.

- 35 The other areas of complaint were billing / payment issues, mostly council tax recovery action (10%); staff practices which includes not returning bins to their collection point (6%); maintenance activities (5%); not actioning a service request (4%); issues with correspondence -mainly contamination notice disputes (3%).

Corporate complaints subjected to independent investigation

- 36 Complaints progressing to independent investigation have become more complex, and the average time to resolve has increased. Consequently, 62% were responded to within the performance standard, compared to 68% last year.
- 37 Analysis shows that up to 19% of these complaints could have been avoided if there had been a timelier or more comprehensive update from the service at the first stage response.
- 38 Details of complaints upheld by independent investigators during quarter two are included in Appendix six.

Statutory Complaints: Adult Health Services (AHS)

- 39 Three quarters of complaints were due to one of the following reasons: dissatisfaction with charges (31 complaints), speed of service (20 complaints), or the application of service guidance/procedures (17 complaints).
- 40 During quarter two of 2022/23, the following actions were taken in response to complaints:
- Reminded a care provider that they can only charge for services delivered within the parameters of their contractual arrangements with the council.
 - Delivered additional training to Mental Health Social Workers in relation to managing discharges from hospital when the admission has been for physical health issues. The session included the role of Intermediate Care Services and the processes for organising the most appropriate care package.

- Reminded staff of the correct procedure for situations where service users refuse their medication but do not have the capacity to understand the impact this would have upon their health.

Statutory Complaints: Children & Young People's Services (CYPS)

- 41 Complaints received during quarter two were due to one of the following reasons: communication (16 complaints), refusal or lack of a service (10 complaints) and staff behaviour (9 complaints).
- 42 54% (19 complaints) related to the Families First teams (responsible for children in need, child protection plans, child, and family assessments (in cases of parental dispute), 37% (13 complaints) related to teams involved with Children Looked After, 6% (2 complaints) related to the Adolescent Safeguarding & Exploitation team (ASET) and 3% (1 complaint) to the Children with Disabilities team.

Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)

- 43 Two of the 13 decisions delivered during quarter two were upheld (15%) and details are included in Appendix seven. Additional information regarding complaints escalated to the Ombudsman is available [here](#).

Recent developments that enhance the customer experience

- 44 The Chatbot project, to reduce avoidable contact and provide digital customer service 24/7 via the council's website, continued to progress during quarter two.
- 45 Updates to the platform, technical builds, accessibility testing / approval along with product training were all completed during quarter two. Staff development and technical investigation into system integration will commence during quarter three to assess viability.
- 46 Also, during quarter two, we investigated using additional functionality within the Eckoh¹⁰ product. This includes sending customer satisfaction surveys via text message at the end of each telephone call and incorporating real time information within the Eckoh system. The latter will be piloted on a sample of high volume, low complexity customer journeys.

¹⁰ Eckoh is the voice recognition system deployed on the main contact centre 03000 number, it prompts the caller to 'describe in a few words' why they are calling. It understands and connects the person to the correct agent or department as well as offering a text message with a link to the appropriate information on the corporate website.

47 During quarter two, customer services refreshed their approach to using customer feedback to inform learning. As part of this, we completed a detailed analysis of customer contact and experience for the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change service grouping. Service performance clinics will review the report and discuss service improvement opportunities. An update will be provided in future reports.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- Previous Customer Feedback reports presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

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Appendix 3: Sample of suggestions received during quarter two, 2022/23

Suggestion: add the option to request a new green recycling bag to online form.

Our Response:

Our CRM team is looking at the feasibility of this.

Suggestion: amend the missed bin form so other missed properties can be reported at the same time.

Our Response: residents can only report a missed bin relating to their own property.

Suggestion: When sending council tax refunds to solicitors can the name and address it relates to be included to ensure it can be linked to a client

Our Response: The refund cheques are printed using a bulk interface job, so we are unable to add any further details. However, we are investigating whether this can be a future system enhancement.

Suggestion: Allow customers to use Apple Pay to book theatre tickets online.

Our Response: We are considering this option.

Suggestion: Install a handrail in main gala auditorium to help people with mobility issues descend the steps

Our Response: we are looking into this

Suggestion: Provide charging points for electric disability scooters

Our Response: We are looking at the feasibility of offering charging at council-operated community centre buildings.

Suggestion: Additional signage at the entrance to Seaham marina to make the area more visible.

Our Response: Planning and conservation colleagues feel there is already a multitude of signage along the sea front and more prominent signage would be detrimental to the setting. The compromise is the smaller signage which is in place.

Suggestion: Include a seating plan in our paper 'what's on' theatre booklets to help those who book via telephone to plan their visit.

Our Response: We are looking at the feasibility of this.

Suggestion: Keep theatre bars open after performances

Our Response: This has been considered but is not financially viable.

Suggestion: Provide an outdoor seating for the café / bar area of the gala

Our Response: Not financially viable as the area would need to be cordoned off because of the wind and we don't have funding for barriers.

Suggestion: Regular collections of food waste and compostable bags

Our Response: Once the government's Resource and Waste Strategy is released, we will be able to look at how to best implement these requirements.

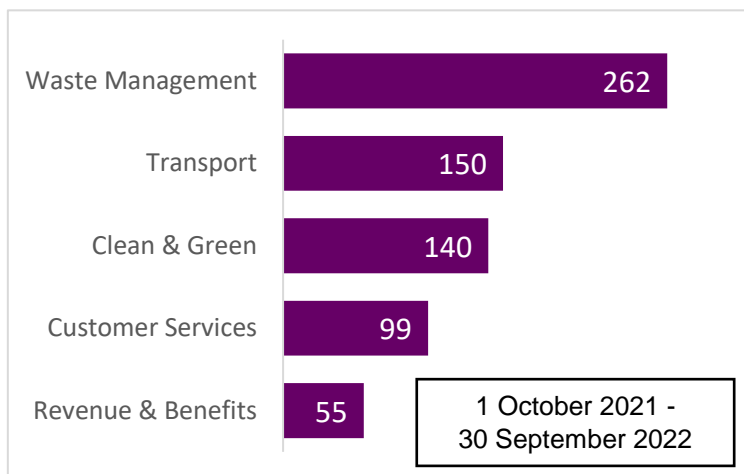
Suggestion: Reduced fee for those signing up to Garden Waste part way through the year

Our Response: We review the fee every year to ensure the scheme remains financially viable. In future reviews, we will consider the possibility of introducing a reduced fee for those signing up part way through the year.

Suggestion: Provide a place (section to the council's website) so residents can praise people / organisations for 'kindness in the Community'

Our Response: The current way of recognising good deeds of residents is via the Chairman's Medal. The public can nominate members of the community for the medal.

Appendix 4: Sample of compliments received during quarter two, 2022/23



Just to compliment the excellent work the chap does in litter picking. He does a lot of areas which were previously left as well as the main areas. He makes a difference.

an excellent, informative and well-judged talk.
(Records Office)

big thank you from customer for the £75 support payment that was really appreciated. Customer has worked all her life and has never been entitled to anything so is very grateful

would like to say thank you to the Clean & Green team who do work hard to keep the area nice.

Could not be without Care Connect, they are amazing and always a quick response when you need help. Myself and my husband would highly recommend them.

Spoke to 2 ladies on separate occasions when I phoned and both were super lovely and helpful. Despite them being super busy with calls they remained professional and friendly! Super helpful and nice and I hope the best for them both! Thank you

caller is reporting that crew had been out to repair the footpath at her father's address a couple of days ago, she has advised they have done a brilliant job and done the work to a very high standard, she states her father is over the moon with it, caller has advised the crew were very professional and patient and engaged well with her father

Customer impressed with efficient service of the Durham County Records Office

Spoke to a very pleasant lady, she was able to answer all my questions and arrange for the fitting of a personal alarm, many thanks

wanted to say how lovely the wild flowers look at the Arnison roundabout on the 167, every time I passed it just made me smile

Just wanted to express our gratitude for the help and support putting together a gym routine to suit the needs of my grandson who has a mobility disability, employee from the Chester Le street leisure centre, arranged appointments to go through adapted routines to suit his needs, we appreciate his time also his expertise knowledge on exercise that would benefit my grandsons condition. Thank you so much.

wanted to thank our bin collectors who do a fantastic job and always go above and beyond

I wanted to thank for all her help. She has been very, very good. She helped with my daughter's Blue badge

Customer reported flytipping and litter to colleague this morning, she said he was very polite and helpful and explained procedures fully and seemed a very happy person and it was a pleasure to talk to him. It was cleared promptly.

To all at care connect, we just wanted to say a genuine thankyou for the help which you gave my dad, during his illness. Dad wanted to remain in his own home, which he did, in no small part due to the care and support given by care connect. When Called out everyone was sincere, considerate, reliable, comforting, professional, knowledgeable to name just a few of the describing words. We all had so much confidence in you. Thank you from all of our family and especially dad who was so grateful.

I wouldn't be without you guys, feel more safe knowing you are there, thank you all.

thanks for all the help - gone above and beyond

Really pleased to see the work done to resurface cycle paths at Seaton and South Hetton. Much needed and good on you for making that investment. A real joy to ride. Keep going

Appendix 5: Sample of comments received with the star ratings during quarter 2, 2022/23

5★ - Care Connect (Apply) – “Very easy and quick form to fill in, thank you”	5★ - Bin (New, Replacement, Repair) – “Very easy to order a new bin and navigate the site”	5★ - Waste Permit – “Very easy to do especially after filling in the details already once they are all saved for the next permit”
	3★ - Customer Document Submission – “Time Consuming”	5★ - Environment Awards – “The form was user friendly and very easy to use”
4★ - School Transport (Apply for a concession) – Uploading documents in the correct format was tricky)		5★ - Dog Fouling – “Very easy to report a problem”
5★ - Pest Control (Domestic) – “You do everything to help, I cant suggest anything else”	1★ - Fixed Penalty Notice (Payment) – “Payment failed first time, with no confirmation or messages. I didn’t know whether my card had been debited or not”	5★ - Customer Satisfaction Survey – “Very easy to book collection of our sofa and it was collected on the day specified”
3★ - Taxis (apply for a driver licence) – “When selecting a postcode to find an address it took 12 attempts before it would work”	1★ - Customer Satisfaction Survey – “I was unsuccessful using the online service”	4★ - Customer Satisfaction Survey – “Would like to be able to speak to someone”
4★ - Customer Document Submission – “When applying online for bus pass the instructions do not mention to download a photo along with your documents”	5★ - Anti Social Behaviour – “Keep up the good work and keep Durham the place we do not just live in but love at all levels”	4★ - Flytipping – “No problem, easy to follow instructions”
	5★ - Customer Satisfaction Survey – “The bulky items were collecting in a timely manner. The process was easy from booking online to the collection”	5★ - Customer Satisfaction Survey – “Very Helpful and helped with my inquiry”
1★ - Archaeology Day (Order Tickets) – “Would not allow me to fill in my address. Not easy for older people to find way around the site “	5★ - Noise Complaint – “Sometimes access to the online service is very slow or unresponsive”	3★ - Waste Permit – “Request for additional information delayed process. These queries should have been requested at time of adding items.
	2★ - Street lighting – “Slow response & tired of having to report these lights not working”	5★ - Road or Footpath Obstruction (Nonvehicle) – “Straightforward, although having more info about the form may help”

Appendix 6: Independent investigations by Customer Feedback Team where corporate complaints were upheld

Complaint Upheld	Our Response
<p>Time taken to process an energy rebate payment and the lack of response to repeated contact.</p>	<p>Although no fault was found in the processing of the energy payment, there were issues with how this complaint was handled</p> <p>We have apologised to the complainant for any inconvenience caused and provided appropriate feedback to the officers involved.</p>
<p>Not collecting an item of bulky waste (and disputing that the item was not presented on collection day).</p>	<p>Despite the complainant confirming the item's location, the crew attended the wrong side of the property.</p> <p>We have apologised to the complainant and provided feedback to the service area.</p>
<p>Not emptying a refuse bin on two occasions due to the crew recording it as an additional bin.</p>	<p>Although no fault was found in our response to two bins being presented with the same house number, poor communication resulted in the bin being missed a second time.</p> <p>On both occasions we returned and emptied the bin within three working days of being notified of the miss.</p> <p>We have apologised to the customer for the level of service provided.</p>
<p>Time taken to address customer's request regarding overgrown vegetation</p>	<p>The issue arose from a fault within our computer system which resulted in our teams being unaware that this request was outstanding. Once this oversight was brought to the attention of the teams involved, the request was actioned accordingly.</p> <p>We have apologised to the customer.</p>

Complaint partially upheld	Our Response
Refuse bin being sporadically missed by collection crews	<p>No fault was found with the initial response to the complaint.</p> <p>However, the crew should have recorded that the bin was not presented at the kerbside. This would have enabled the council to provide the customer with information regarding the collection point from an earlier date. Feedback has been provided to the service.</p>
Contact in relation to the welfare of a relative was not in a timely manner.	<p>This oversight occurred when non-essential services were temporarily unavailable due to COVID-19.</p> <p>We have apologised to the customer and provided feedback to senior managers on the importance of providing communication that has been assured during initial contact.</p>
Not moving a litter bin from council-owned land to the front of customer's property	<p>No fault is found in our response to the request.</p> <p>However, as we have been unable to confirm the date the bin was installed at its current location (we acknowledge the customer's statement that the bin has been moved 2-3 times previously) the complaints has been partially upheld.</p>
Glass recycling box missed on several occasions	<p>Although no fault was found with the actions taken by the team regarding this matter, we are unable to confirm if a crew returned to empty the glass recycling box on one occasion.</p>
Handling of a proposal for a road bypass	<p>Although no fault was found with the process and response, we accept that the complaint was not handled in accordance with our standard procedure resulting in a delay and lack of contact.</p>
Refused entry to Stainton Grove Household Waste Recycling Centre as hire vehicle exceeded six metres in length.	<p>Although no fault was found with the decision to refuse access, we accept there were inaccuracies within our initial complaint response. Appropriate feedback has been provided to the service area.</p>
Broken glass being repeatedly left behind following recycling collections	<p>The broken glass was due to a defect on the collection vehicle. Crews have been reminded to promptly inform the team leader if additional cleansing is required.</p> <p>We have apologised to the customer.</p>

Appendix 7: Complaints upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)

Ombudsman's final decision	Agreed action
There is no evidence to suggest customer contaminated the recycling waste container.	Reduce the term of application for the customer's advisory letter from 12 months to six. Review the council's Refuse and Recycling Collection policy.
There was fault in the council's communication with the customer about carer fees and outstanding invoices.	Apologise for the reminders. Consider additional Disability Related Expenditure allowances for laundry and stairlift costs.

Data Tables

Key to Symbols

Performance against target and previous performance		Performance against comparable groups		Direction of Travel	
✓	meeting or exceeding	✓	Performance is better than national or north east	↑	higher than comparable period
■	within 2%	×	Performance is worse than national or north east	→	static against comparable period
×	more than 2% behind			↓	lower than comparable period

NB: oldest data in left column

Types of indicators

There are two types of performance indicators throughout the report:

1. Key target indicators – targets are set as improvements can be measured regularly and can be actively influenced by the council and its partners; and
2. Key tracker indicators – performance is tracked but no targets are set as they are long-term and / or can only be partially influenced by the council and its partners.

National Benchmarking

We compare our performance to all English authorities. The number of authorities varies according to the performance indicator and functions of councils, e.g., educational attainment is compared to county and unitary councils, however waste disposal is compared to district and unitary councils.

North East Benchmarking

The North East figure is the average performance from the authorities within the North East region - County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, South Tyneside, Sunderland.

More detail is available from the Strategy Team at performance@durham.gov.uk

Performance Indicator		Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
			Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
No. of contacts through reported channels		1,820,411 (Oct 21-Sep 22)		1,491,385	1,553,062	-	-	→	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of contact through reported digital channels		23% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		26%	15%	-	-	↑	↓	→	↓	Yes
% of contact received through reported non-digital channels		77% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		74%	85%	-	-	↓	↑	→	↑	Yes
% of CRM requests meeting performance standard		79% (Jul-Sep 22)		74% ✓	n/a	-	-	↓	↑	↓	↑	Yes
% of respondents who were satisfied with overall service delivery (CRM)		82% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		78% ✓	81% ✓	-	-	↑	↑	→	→	Yes
% of customers who request a service via an online form who give a rating of 4 or 5 stars		84% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		85% ■	n/a	-	-	↓	↑	↓	→	Yes
Statutory Complaints: Adult and Health Services	No. received	92 (Oct 21-Sep 22)	75 x	82 x	84 x	-	-	↓	↓	↑	↑	Yes
	% within performance standard	100% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		100% ✓	100% ✓	-	-	→	→	→	→	Yes
	% upheld (fully or partially)	59% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		49% x	44% x	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
Statutory Complaints: Children and Young People's Service	No. received	35 (Oct 21-Sep 22)	46 ✓	43 ✓	100 ✓	-	-	→	→	↓	↑	Yes
	% within performance standard	77% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		72% ✓	76% ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	→	Yes
	% upheld (fully or partially)	51% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		42% x	33% x	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↓	Yes
No. of corporate complaints		2,586 (Oct 21-Sep 22)		2,683 ✓	2,502 x	-	-	↑	↓	↑	↑	Yes

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
Ratio of corporate complaints to service requests	0.6 (Oct 21-Sep 22)		0.6 ■	0.7 ✓	-	-	→	→	→	→	Yes
No. of independent investigations	205 (Oct 21-Sep 22)		204	192	-	-	↓	↓	↑	↑	Yes
No. of complaints submitted to Ombudsman	61 (Oct 21-Sep 22)		74 ✓	91 ✓	-	-	↓	↑	↓	↑	Yes
% of complaints responded to within performance standard	77% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		76% ✓	85% x	-	-	↓	↓	→	→	Yes
% of corporate complaints upheld	44% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		49% ✓	55% ✓	-	-	→	↓	↑	↓	Yes
No. of priority correspondence received	2,154 (Oct 21-Sep 22)		2,645	n/a	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of priority correspondence responded to within performance standard	68% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		61% ✓	n/a	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to within 20 working days	79% (Apr-Jun 22)	95% x	83% x	86% x	-	-	↑	↓	↑	↓	Yes
% of CRM service requests which were self-serve	72% (Oct 21-Sep 22)		67% ✓	49% ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
No. of compliments	685 (Oct 21-Sep 22)		966 x	688 x	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes
No. of suggestions	500 (Oct 21-Sep 22)		550 x	546 x	-	-	↑	↓	↓	↓	Yes